Pending power projects in South India

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: (Pondicherry): Madam Deputy Chairman, I would like to raise a very important issue about the pending power projects of South India. The hon'ble Prime Minister and the Power Minister who is sitting here, have time and again been saying in this House and also outside that more than Rs. 27,000 crores of foreign investment is coming into India for the setting up of power projects in this country.

Apart from that, the Government is also setting up power projects through the State Power Finance Corporation. It is also getting funds from abroad for this purpose. Madam, power is one of the primary objects and is very much required for the developmental activities in all the States in our country and the Government has given a lot of importance to the power projects. In Karnataka and in Andhra Pradesh, a lot of NRI investments are coming in power projects. The Andhra Pradesh Government has floated various power project schemes. But, as far as Tamil Nadu and Kerala is concerned, Kayangulam project is a very important project. This project has got a tie-up with foreign investment and is scheduled to be commissioned by the end of 1994 But Madam, clearance of the project, signing of the agreements, commencement of the construction work and setting up of the project, etc. are taking a lot of time. Then, Madam, there is another very important project in my adjoining State, which the hon. Minister also knows. It is Neyveli. Now, there is an expansion programme going on in this project; foreign investment is also coming in; the hon. Minister is also taking a very keen interest in resolving all the disputes. But, Madam, apart from the existing potential, which, of course, is very large, two more units can be opened or can be set up with a capacity of 210 MW. This will definitely help the southern part of Tamil Nadu. But, to my surprise, Madam, I find there is a lack of interest on the part of the officials in the setting up of the power projects there.

Then, Madam, the Central Government was kind enough to give us a 50 MW power project in our State of Pondicherry. This is a gas-based power project in the Karaikkal region. The Planning Commission has approved it. The Power Ministry has also given its nod. But, Madam, the procedural tangles are consuming a lot of time. Whether it is Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu or Pondicherry, because of the procedure that has been adopted by the Power Ministry in clearing these projects, there is cost escalation, there is time over-run and, so, the projects are not coming through. Now, the hon. Minister takes interest and goes abroad for seeking investment in power projects. Then, the hon. Prime Minister goes abroad and requests the foreigners and the NRIs to come and invest here. The atmosphere is also congenial for this. The foreign investors would also like to come and invest. But the bureaucratic bottlenecks are not allowing the power projects to come up in this country in a big way, especially in the southern parts of the country. Madam, you are pretty well aware of the fact that the power-cut in Tamil Nadu is more than 60 per cent. The hon. Minister, who is sitting here, knows the power position in Tamil Nadu very well. Everybody is concerned. The people are also concerned that since there is this power shortage, the huge potential for industrial development that is there in this State cannot be exploited.

Therefore, I urge upon the hon. Minister who is sitting in this House to take personal interest in trying to see that these bureaucratic bottlenecks are removed and also see to it that the power projects that are pending with the Government as far as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Pondicherry are concerned, are cleared as early as possible.

There is another hope which the hon. Minister for Petroleum has given us and that is in regard to the Southern Gas Grid which is coming up in Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. There is another potential and Pondicherry is very much there in that. It is the gas-based power plant.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We are not having a debate. Sorry, it is a special mention.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, I am bringing it to the notice of the hon'ble Minister, who is very much here.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: He would be knowing in detail. So, please. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Yes, so that hon'ble Minister may respond. Gas-based power pants may also come. Then, these kinds of bottlenecks are there. The investors who are coming, and the foreigners who are coming, get the impression that with the Government of India they could not get on very well and therefore, they are not coming in a very big way. Therefore, I want the hon'ble Power Minister to see that an ultimate assurance in this House is given that the power projects will be cleared as early as possible so that a lot of investment is welcomed in the Southern part of the counry. Madam, the hon'ble Minister is here. I seek the indulgence of the hon'ble Minister to at least give an assurance on the floor of the House.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri B. K. Hariprasad.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, the Minister is very much here.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, No...Assurances are always given...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: The hon'ble Minister can respond to my query, because it is a matter on which the Minister has given assurance everywhere not only in this House but also on the public platforms. It was said that they would clear the projects as early as possible. I would like to know the Minister's reaction to it.

THE MINISTER OF POWER (SHRI N. K. P. SALVE): He is absolutely right to the extent he is speaking about a very grim situation on account of shortage, of power in Southern India. That is a bitter reality. We are conscious about it. Kayangulam is already started. We have started implementing the project in Kerala. As to other projects that he has referred to, Madam, I can assure him that we will do our very very best, level best, to expedite the same.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN SHRI Hariprasad.

Situation arising out of floods in Karnataka

SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD (Karnataka): Madam, I rise to draw the attention of the august House and the Government about the miseries and destruction inflicted on rural farmers in Karnataka Madam, monsoon is welcomed everywhere, every year. But, in many districts of Karnataka, it has left a trail of devastation caused by torrent rains. Madam, this year from the first week of June to the first and second week of July there was a heavy rain for days together, flooding vast areas under crop and habitaion, eight districts of the State—Dakshin Kannada, Kodagu, Uttara Kannada, Belgaum, Hassan, Shimoga, Chickmagalur and Mysore in that order of intensity. The major rivers —Cauvery, Kabini, Hemavathi and Harangi and their tributaries were in spate, eroding embankments and submerging habitations on the delta. The Malanad districts of Chickmagalur and Shimoga and Mysore on the plains were among the worst-hit.

The toll in terms of human lives lost is officially put at 60. More than 1,250 villages were drowned and 277 villages